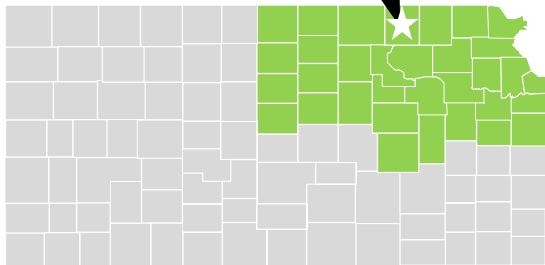


COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

Healthy Early Learning Project

Location: Waterville, KS

Organization: Marshall and Nemaha County
partners



The **Healthy Early Learning Project (HELP)** was developed to address the unmet need for and support of healthy promotion and education as integral instruments in alleviating the ongoing health needs of early childhood obesity in Marshall and Nemaha Counties. The goals of the program were to increase physical activity levels of students along with consumption of fruit and vegetables.

Strategies: The program was built on a model previously developed for grade students in the same counties by using research/evidence-based physical activity and nutrition curriculum.

- Grant funds were used to build and increase the capacity of local school health systems
- Preschool instructors trained to conduct health assessments and integrate nutrition and physical activity opportunities into curriculum
- Special events offered to engage parents and community members

Successes: This initiative has helped make great strides in the prevention of early childhood obesity and the onset of chronic disease. Thanks in part to ongoing collaboration, program leadership, and effective communication, the program led to a decrease in obesity rates of preschool students, a health advisory team at every site, 99% of preschool students attaining at least 1 hour of physical activity per day, and every site offering fruits and/or vegetables as a snack on a daily basis. As a result of the program, new and enhanced policies were developed and implemented to sustain the impact seen during the duration of the project.

CELEBRATING THE POWER OF RURAL!